

PROBLEM STATEMENT: Visitor Attitude Towards Charging Fees at Selected Sites Within the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area.

TITLE: An Evaluation of Visitor Responses to Charging Recreation Fees Within the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area

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PARTNERSHIPS AND ROLES: We will partner and work closely with the current BLM, managers, planners, contacts and partners.

TYPE OF SUPPORT REQUESTED: Research.

The Policy Analysis and Science Assistance for Federal Land Management Science Program (PASA) of the Midcontinent Ecological Science Center (MESC) is dedicated to studying the relationship between humans and the environment. The objective of the PASA is to conduct studies that seek to understand how humans are affected by environmental management decisions and how human activities interact with natural resource management. The PASA is proposing to conduct basic social science research to support a BLM Fee Demonstration Project (Fee Demo) within the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area in Grand Junction, CO. The PASA is responsible for conducting research in support of management decisions. Including fee demo information into its new management plan is the responsibility of the BLM. However, to meet its obligations, the PASA will seek direction from the BLM regarding management options to be analyzed, type of information to be provided, and basic research questions to be addressed. The NCA Manager and planning staff of the BLM are responsible for including social and economic assessments in the management in such a way that understanding these factors aids planning decisions and helps guide management actions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS: Congress authorized an extension of the recreation fee demonstration program in section 312 of the DOI and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002, (PL 107-63). The Bureau of Land Management is one of the four federal land management agencies mandated to implement the program and evaluate its impact on the visiting public. This study will be designed to scientifically evaluate BLM visitor's reactions to changes in the fees and the impact the fees have on visitation.

There is a lack of data related to the costs, revenues and management problems associated with the demonstration fees in this NCA, and data on the number of participants in each of the activities for which fees are charged. This information will help resource managers and Congress to determine if the demonstration projects are worth the costs involved, and will help shape fee programs in the future.

The purpose for this study is to determine the obstacles and opportunities for the management of fee demonstration program within the Colorado Canyons NCA. It is important for managers to be aware of the public's likely response to proposed

management actions and their preferences for resource conditions. Unfortunately, very little is known about public attitudes and perceptions concerning a fee demonstration program within this NCA. The findings from this study may offer evidence for needed changes in education programs.

OBJECTIVES: BLM is interested in charging user fees for parking at the Kokopelli's Trailhead. Currently no information exists as to what visitors are willing to pay for using these areas. The primary objective for this research is to design and implement a comprehensive survey of visitors to the area which would have as its principal goal the collection of information on the visitors willingness to pay to recreate in this area. A final report will be developed to summarize the survey results. The information collected during this study can be used in revising or updating management plans, developing management strategies, establishing objectives for visitor or resource management, and writing scholarly publications. A general plan for expanding this baseline knowledge and applying trend analysis to representative areas across agency boundaries is being considered. The data gathered from previous fee demo research, will be used to show the impacts in various settings for the FWS, NPS, BLM and USFS. The general objective will be to draw upon that body of research and integrate the specific results on this NCA with the larger body of baseline data.

The criteria used to evaluate fee acceptability and the value of collected fees in contributing to the maintenance of quality habitat on NCA lands is an important issue. Other fee demo research indicates that federal public land recreation users generally accept fees charged for use of these areas, however, the level of acceptance vary depending on the levels of fees, the manner in which fees are introduced and their perceived fairness. We will design a study to scientifically evaluate visitor perceptions about fee demo, recreational benefits and attitudes concerning BLM land management priorities in the Colorado Canyon NCA. Earlier fee demo studies give valuable information concerning trends, but not specific on site acceptance nor assessments of appropriate levels. Completion of a survey to capture visitor opinions is essential to define the differences in attitudes and perception about the fee demo program. Such information will furnish an important guide for defining future management options.

The information collected in this survey will document perceptions about the fee demo program and can be used to refine regulations related to long-term management of BLM lands. Study objectives are:

- To determine visitor opinions related to both positive and negative effects of a fee demo program on personal, landscape, and regional scales;
- To determine visitor perceptions related to the importance of a fee demo as it relates to the increase in visitor recreational needs and;
- To determine the BLM's effectiveness in communication and justification of required fee demo program.

METHODS AND STUDY AREA: The data for this research will be obtained from an on-site survey of visitors this NCA. The survey will be a one-page (front and back, legal size paper [8.5 x 14 inches]) self-administered instrument. A random sample of individuals will be asked to complete the survey at the end of their visit. Manual completion of questionnaires will allow more visitors to participate, provide a representative sample, and reduce burden hours.

Information will be gathered in a manner that will be easy for the respondents to answer. All responses will be directly coded and entered into a database. All responses will be confidential. No information will be tabulated or released that could be traced to any individual respondent. The survey instrument will employ fixed alternative questions plus space for comments. The respondents will be queried about their understanding of selected terms used in recreation management and attitudes in the form of responses to potential ecosystem management practices.

The study area will be the Colorado Canyon National Conservation Area. More specifically the Kokopelli Loop Trail System which supports approximately 30,000 mountain bikers per year

PROJECT DURATION: 18-20 months

PRIORITY: High. The BLM is charged with completing a new management plan for the Colorado Canyons NCA by October 2003. Information on visitors willingness to pay for recreational uses is needed prior to completing the new plan. BLM managers would need the information no later than Spring 2003.

PRODUCTION AND SCHEDULE:

Task	Timeline
Design and pretest survey instrument	3 months
OMB submittal and approval process	6-8 months*
Administer Survey	3 months
Data Entry	3 months
Data Analysis	4 months
Preparation of final report	3 months
Final Report	Spring 2003

* The OMB submittal, review and approval process generally takes approximately 4-6 months to complete. To date we have completed the process in this allotted time. However, in 2001, the DOI Office of Water and Science Committee established an internal review process, which has extended this time estimate by an additional 2-4 months.

BUDGET:

	FY2002	FY2003	TOTAL
Salaries:			
Principal investigator (GS13)	7,885	7,885	[15,770]
Co-PI (GS11)	16,623	16,623	[33,246]
Research Assistant (Contractor 425 Hrs)	\$10, 000	\$8,800	18,800
SCEP (0.10 FTE GS7)	3,346	3,346	6,692
Other Expenses			
Travel	\$3000	\$3000	6,000
Supplies, printing, etc.	500	1,200	1,700
Data Entry & Analysis	1,500	2,000	3,500
MESC Science Support	1,488	1,488	2,976
Total	19,834	19,834	39,668

[Contributed]

